

## PERSPECTIVES

Voices MARK Z. BARABAK COLUMNIST

## Dodgers learn you can't separate sports, politics

Sports offer an escape, an oasis, a relief from the anxiety and troubles of day-to-day living. There's the competition, of course. There's also a reassuring certainty.

Clear-cut winners and losers. Scores meticulously kept. Rules and boundaries that are officiated and maintained as firmly and precisely as a chalked third base line.

In short, none of the compromise or messy ambiguities of daily life, which is part of the appeal and also part of the fantasy.

And it is fantasy to try to divorce sports from the times we live in and the events that unfold, sometimes frightfully, beyond the comfortable confines of the stadium and arena.

Take the Los Angeles Dodgers and the team's fitful response to the immigration raids terrorizing large swaths of its fan base.

The team, one of Southern California's most revered (and lucrative) institutions, caved last week amid a growing public outcry and committed \$1 million to help families affected by the Trump administration's heavy-handed immigration policies. Further initiatives, the organization promised, are on the way.

Escapism only goes so far.

"Sports are political through and through," said Jules Boykoff, a former pro soccer player-turned-political scientist, "and to deny it is to deny reality."

Amy Bass, a professor of sport studies at Manhattanville University and the author of numerous works on the subject, agreed.

"Sport is part of our cultural, political, social and economic landscape," Bass said. "It is an industry that pays people. It is an industry that entertains people. It is an industry that expresses some of our greatest moments and our most tragic moments."

"There is nothing," she said, "that you can't talk about through the lens of sport."

Or shout about and argue over, as the case may be.

The Dodgers' gesture struck many as too little, too late; an unforced error, if you will.

"That's the best way to describe how the Boys in Blue have acted," my fellow columnist Gustavo Arellano wrote, "as the city embla-



CARLIN STIEHL Los Angeles Times

PEOPLE TURN out to protest against ongoing immigration raids in Los Angeles, as well as the Dodgers.

zoned on their hats and road jerseys battles Donald Trump's toxic alphabet soup of federal agencies that have conducted immigration sweeps across Los Angeles over the past two weeks."

The Dodgers were studiously vague in last week's capitulation, er, announcement of \$1 million in goodwill payments. No mention, much less condemnation, of the brutality that Immigration and Customs Enforcement has employed in some of its raids. No reference to the parents separated from their children. No acknowledgment of the innocents — including U.S. citizens — swept up in some of the Trump administration's indiscriminate raids.

"What's happening in Los Angeles has reverberated among thousands upon thousands of people," said Stan Kasten, the team president, in a masterwork of opacity and euphemism. "We believe that by committing resources and taking action, we will continue to support and uplift the communities of Greater Los Angeles."

But, really, is it any surprise the team would first duck, then seek cover in such platitudes?

Lest we forget, the Dodgers are first and foremost a business, just like every other professional sports franchise. Michael Jordan may or may not have uttered the quote famously

attributed to him — "Republicans buy sneakers, too" — as a reason for pro athletes and their teams to steer clear of politics. But it speaks resoundingly to a bottom-line truism of the sporting world.

Put another way, yes, the Dodgers have a substantial and remunerative following in the Latino community, which is very much under siege. But Trump devotees

also fill a lot of seats and buy a lot of Dodger Dogs.

If we're being honest, how many of those who root for the Dodgers — or any sports franchise, for that matter — would be more than willing to yield the moral high ground if it means a winning season and championship? Righteousness, after all, isn't reflected in the standings.

So what's a cross-pres-

sured, community-grounded, profit-seeking sports organization to do?

Events, spiraling downward by the day, may have left the team little choice.

"The more people are affected, maybe I shouldn't say affected but *traumatized*, by what's happening on the streets of L.A. and the neighborhoods of L.A. ... this left the Dodgers with much less room in which to

try to shimmy through without saying anything," said Boykoff, who teaches political science at Oregon's Pacific University. "The circumstances in a lot of ways forced their hand."

So the organization weighed in — belatedly, tepidly — leaving very few people happy or satisfied.

Little surprise there.

If we're looking for a bright side, perhaps it's this: Maybe instead of pretending sports exist in a pristine, politics-free vacuum, we can acknowledge their centrality to our daily lives and find, if not commonality, at least a common ground for discussion and debate.

"We can talk about history, we can talk about economics, we can talk about social change," Bass said. "We can talk about how sport actually move political needles."

Not, of course, on the playing field. But in the stands, in sports bars, at tailgate parties, on talk radio, wherever fans of various cloth gather.

"The more we recognize it," Bass said, "the more that we can see that sport can actually provide this landscape for having very difficult conversations through a place that brings a lot of different kinds of people into the same space."

It may seem far-fetched at a time of such deep and abiding divisions. But what are sports about if not hope and aspiration?

'I'd like to

BY MICHAEL W.

THE HAGUE Air Force One landed on Tuesday. Trump turned for a brief moment of ceasefire between Israel and one that has pro

elusive. "I'd like to see Russia," Tri reporters before the Netherlands summit and re private convers Russian Preside Putin over the Ukraine. "Vlad me up. He said you with Iran?" don't need help need help with y

"I hope we're getting a deal Russia," Trump a shame."

It was a rare frustration from Putin at a in Moscow's Ukraine, and a leaders and the Europe seek from Trump th

The president the summit on Tning in The Hag is expected to leaders from ac including Ukr

"Now we're NATO — we'll g of problems," T the meetings. "new set of proble

The European to leverage Tru on over the ou Israel's war with Ir saw its nuclear fenses eliminate diplomatic suc European offici Times. After on precision strik three of Iran's m facilities over the assist the Israeli Trump announ fire in the confl day that has held.

"The message deterrence work ropean official hope, the officia that Trump will

Russia attack kill 20 Ukraine

## Trump gets royal upgrade for visit

BY MIKE CORDER

THE HAGUE — President Trump has a sleepover this week in the Netherlands that is, quite literally, fit for a king.

Trump is visiting The Hague for a summit of the 32 leaders of NATO on Wednesday, and his sleeping arrangements have received a significant upgrade.

He was scheduled to arrive Tuesday night and be whisked by motorcade to the Huis Ten Bosch palace, nestled in a forest on the edge of The Hague, for a dinner with other alliance leaders hosted by Dutch King Willem-Alexander.

Trump had been expected to stay at a swanky hotel in the town of Noordwijk on the Dutch North Sea coast, but not anymore.

A spokesperson for the Dutch government information service, Anna Sophie Posthumus, told the Associated Press that the president will be sleeping at the palace that is home to Willem-Alexander, his Argentine-born wife, Queen Maxima, and their three daughters, though the princesses have mostly flown to Kyiv, Ukraine, to pursue studies.

Parts of Huis ten Bosch and injured palace date to the 17th century. It has a Wasse



THIS SATELLITE image shows Al Udeid Air Base outside Doha, Qatar's capital.

## U.S. base mostly unscathed despite Iranian missile fire

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Al Udeid in Qatar and others in region have braced for strikes and taken precautions.

BY MEG KINNARD AND ELLEN KNICKMEYER

WASHINGTON — Iran retaliated Monday for the U.S. attacks on its nuclear sites by targeting Al Udeid Air Base, a sprawling desert facility in Qatar that serves as a major regional military hub for American forces.

No American or Qatari personnel were harmed, the U.S. military's Central Com

have been on heightened alert and taking additional security precautions in anticipation of potential strikes from Iran, while the Pentagon has shifted military aircraft and warships into and around the region during the conflict.

The U.S. has military sites spread across the region, including in Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria and the United Arab Emirates.

Here's a look at Al Udeid Air Base:

Hosting thousands of American troops

to develop the base, once considered so sensitive that American military officers would say only that it was somewhere "in southwest Asia."

Trump visited the air base during a trip to the region last month.

It was the first time a sitting U.S. president had traveled to the installation in more than 20 years.

#### Tarmac cleared of aircraft and drones

Last week, before the U.S. strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities, Al Udeid saw many of the transport planes, fighter jets and